

# **FACT SHEET | Farm Families Seeing Buffer Success**

## *Minnesota Well On its Way with Statewide, Bipartisan Water Quality Effort*

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According to findings from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), 74 percent of Minnesota’s counties are already 60–100 percent compliant with the state’s bipartisan water quality buffer initiative. The bipartisan law’s flexibility, combined with additional financial resources proposed in Governor Mark Dayton’s budget, will help all landowners participate fully in the statewide effort to improve water quality and wildlife habitat across Minnesota.

Below, hear from three Minnesota farm families about how they have seen success implementing water quality buffers on their land.

### **Don and Rhonda Rudolph, Martin County**

The Rudolfs have been farming in Minnesota since the early 1970s, and have always believed in being good stewards of the land. They’ve employed a number of conservation practices over the years, including terraces and waterways, and are working with the Martin Soil and Water Conservation District to put buffers in where their farm touches Elm Creek – a critical waterway in the county. The buffers will help control erosion and stabilize creek banks, but the Rudolfs are going above and beyond, installing shrubs and trees that will provide wildlife habitat benefits, as well.

**“We’ve always tried to do a good job with conservation,”** said Don Rudolph, **“and the SWCD has been a great resource for identifying practices that fit our farm.”**



*Don and Rhonda Rudolph, center, with their three children, spouses, and grandchildren.*

### **The Gebhardt Family, Mower County**

For the last three decades, the Gebhardt family has implemented conservation field practices on a 150-acre parcel of their farm operations. Jim Gebhardt worked with the Mower SWCD to determine whether these practices benefit water quality more than what would be provided by a 50-foot buffer required under the water quality buffer law. The district confirmed that the combination of practices meets – and goes beyond – the water quality benefits required to satisfy the buffer law.

**“We were losing tons of soil every year on that land before we put in the basins and grass waterways,”** said Jim Gebhardt. **“It’s great to have those projects recognized for their water-quality benefits, but alternative practices to buffers won’t work for everyone. You need to have the right slope of ground to make it work.”**



*Jim Gebhardt*

### **Dave Legvold, Dakota County**

Dave Legvold, a corn and soybean farmer near Northfield, became the first Dakota County farmer to be certified in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWCP). Today, more than 350 farmers statewide are participating in the voluntary program. Enrollment in the program is considered an alternate to the buffer law requirement.

Legvold has implemented several conservation practices on his farm, including strip tillage and no tilling soybeans. He added a saturated buffer (photo) to a field bordered on one side by a creek. Rather than tile lines emptying directly into the creek, the water is held in a control structure which allows the soil to filter out nutrient runoff before going into the creek. Legvold is working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and students from St. Olaf College to monitor nitrate levels at the edge of the field, in the buffer and in the creek.

**“I’m pleased the state is offering the Certification Program as an alternate to the buffer requirement because every farm is different,”** said Dave Legvold. **“I’m also pleased to see these early positive results.”**



*Dave Legvold*